

Present, Past, and Future of the Amherst
Seasonal Homeless Shelter:
A Preliminary Report of the Amherst Housing and
Sheltering Committee

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Intro

Shelter Background

Town of Amherst

Sustainability

Conclusions

Recommendations

Additional Planned Research

History

2009: Warming Place

2010: Milestone Ministries

2011 - present: Craig's Doors

Shelter Purpose

1. Harm Reduction
2. Access to Housing
3. Access to Services

Description

- Location: First Baptist Church
- Time: 9:30pm - 8:00am
- Occupancy Capacity: 22 beds
- Design: Behavior-Based
- Additional Amenities
- Ancillary Services

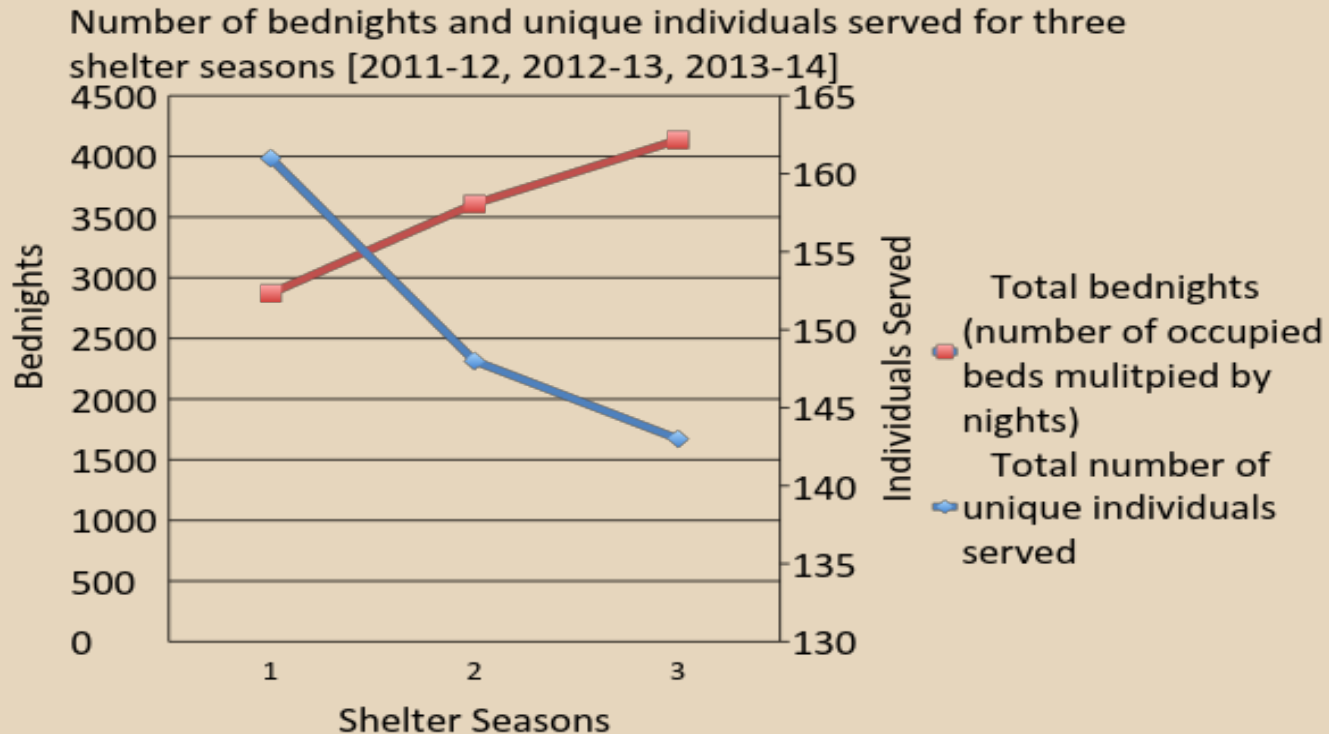
Characteristics of Guests

- The number of unique guests staying at Craig's Place has decreased from 161 to 143 in the three past seasons.
- The composition of the guest population has not changed substantially over the three seasons.
- Gender: In the first and third years women were 20%; in the middle year, 26 %.
- Age: About 14% of guests were unaccompanied youth or young adults aged 17 to 24 yrs while 4% of guests were 62 yrs or older. Average age of guests was 40 yrs.
- Race/Ethnicity: Black individuals constituted 17% in the most recent season, just slightly increased from the preceding two years; For Hispanic individuals there were 11% in the most recent year.
- Income: 65% reported some form of income.
- Veteran Status: Approximately 8% of guests were Veterans.

Characteristics of Guests

- Behavioral Health: 48% had a history of mental illness and 45% some form of substance abuse.
- Physical Disability: 41% were physically disabled;
- Disabling Conditions: Approximately 57% of guests were reported to have some type of disabling conditions (e.g., significant mental health issues; substance abuse; HIV/AIDs; other chronic health conditions).
- Residence Prior to their first shelter entry of the season:
 - 29% had been doubled up with family or friends.
 - 19% had been living outside/on the streets and
 - 19% had been staying at another emergency shelter.
 - 16% had been discharged to homelessness (from a hospital, detox, respite, jail, etc.).
 - The remaining guests reported other types of situations or had missing information.

Shelter Utilization

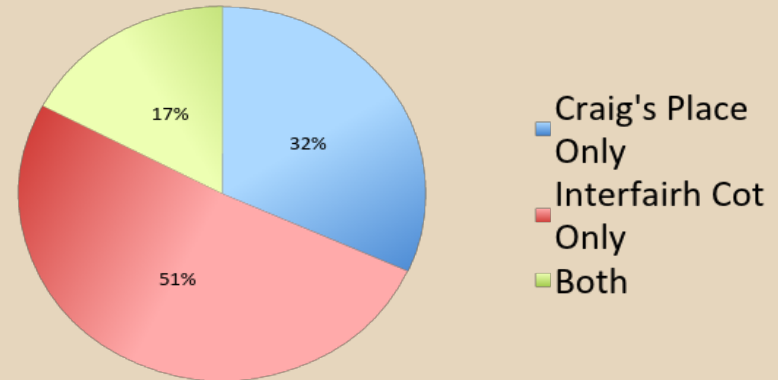


Comparative Utilization

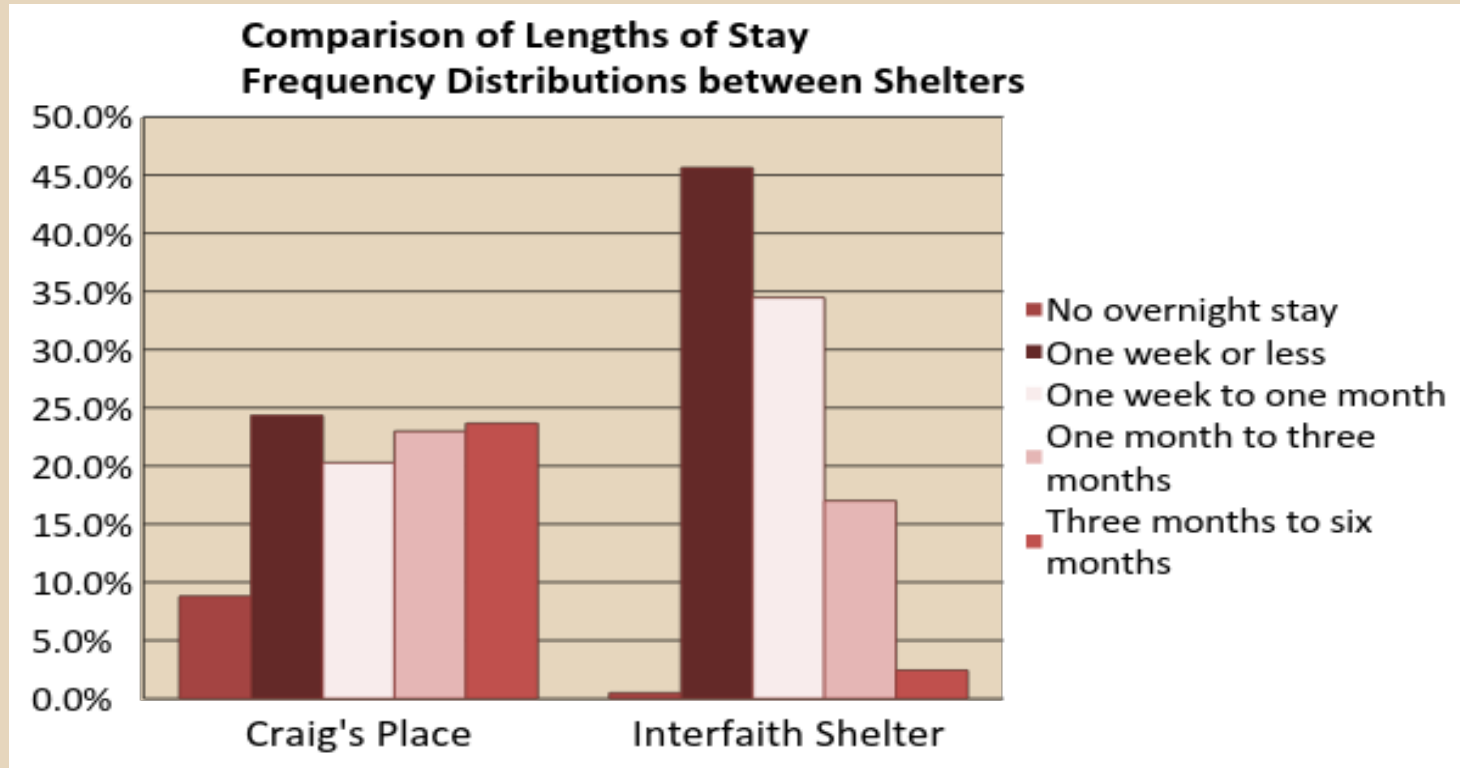
In 2013-14 shelter season, 302 persons used Craig's Place and the Interfaith Cot Shelter in Northampton.

- 96 Craig's Place only
- 154 Interfaith Cot only
- 52 Both shelters

Percentage of guests who used one shelter only or both shelters in 2013-14



Length of Stay Comparisons



Strengths

1. Shelter Environment
2. Location
3. Safety
4. Amenities

Challenges

1. Late Opening
2. Occupancy Capacity
3. Coordination with Service Providers
4. Funding
5. Location Sustainability
6. Community Outreach

Town of Amherst

Shelter Involvement

1. Mandates and inspects regulatory concerns
 - Building Inspection
 - Fire Safety
 - Health and Food Safety
2. Funding
 - Community Block Grant

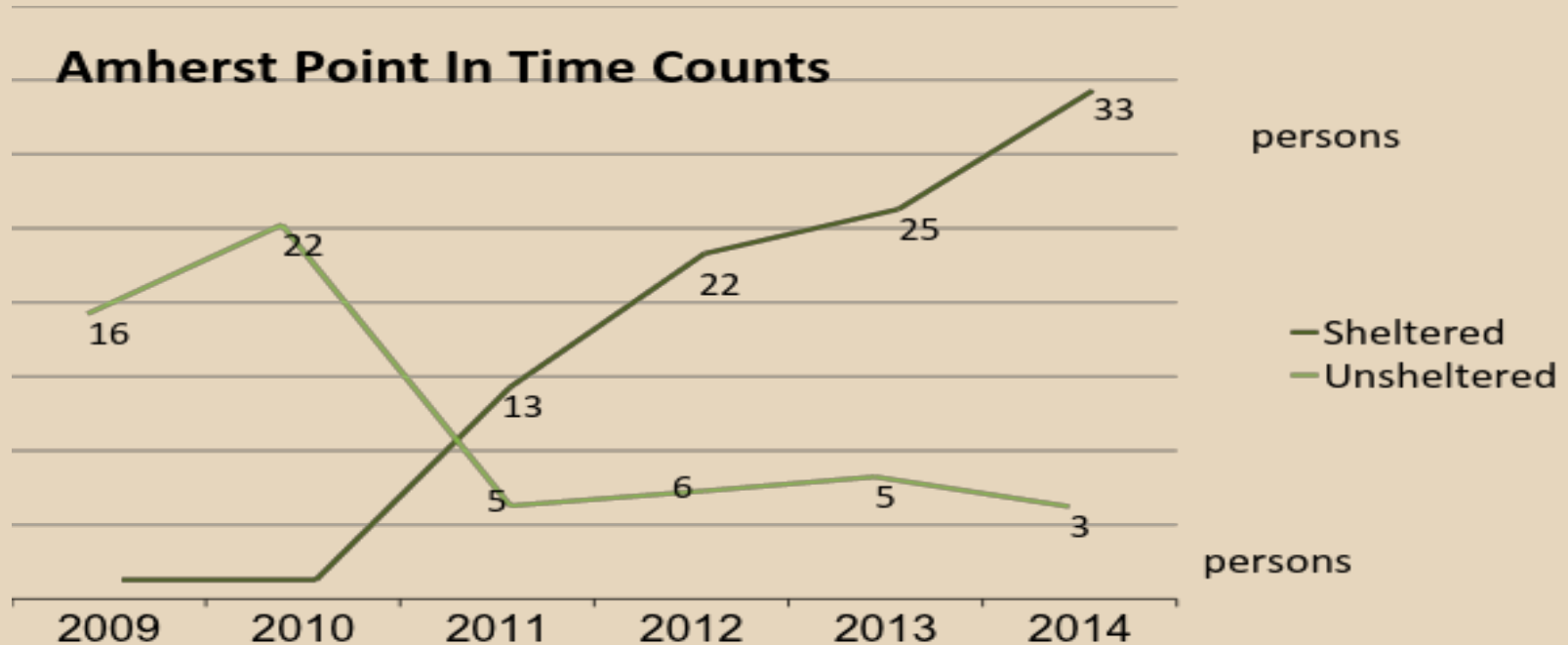
Other Town Involvements

1. Maintains and supports Affordable Housing Initiatives
2. Allocates \$35,000 to Emergency Fund

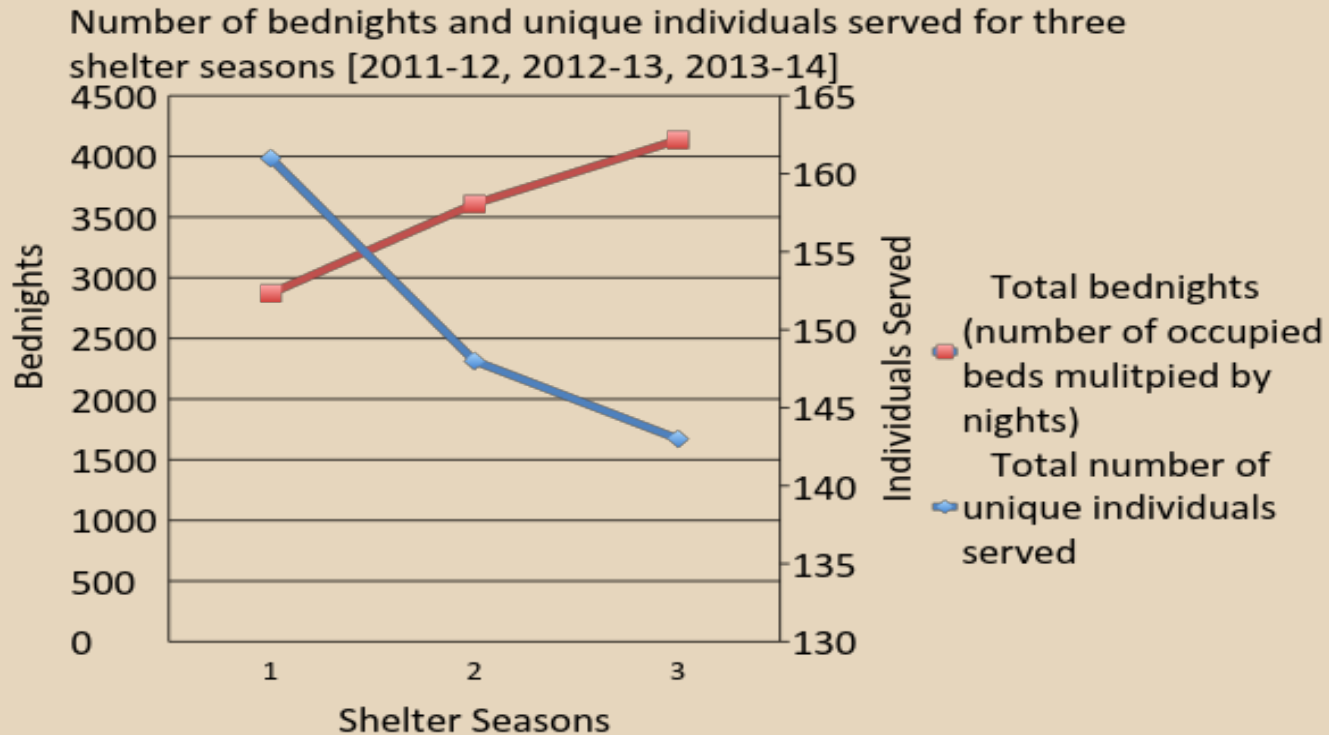
Concerns about Shelter

1. Presence of a shelter causing an increase in the homeless population
2. The potentially dangerous individuals a “wet” shelter draws in

Numbers of Homeless Persons counted in January annually 2009-2014 in Amherst



Shelter Utilization



Public Safety Calls

2013-14 Police and Fire Departments reported the following:

- 18 Emergency Services
- 12 Police calls, in addition to emergency service call which police also respond to
- 4 arrests

Challenges

- Panhandling and loitering of homeless individuals during the day and in the summer
- Gaps in services to provide to homeless and economically distressed individuals

Sustainability

Location

- Temporary Permit of 3-year increments
- Constraint of Late Opening and Early Closing
- Not a Permanent Space

Funding

Current:

- State Budget Earmark: \$200,000
- Town of Amherst: \$70,000
- Emergency Services Grant: \$30,000

Past:

- Mini-Entitlement Community Development Grant

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- ❑ Shelter program is established after five plus seasons with current operations funding and a well-known location at the First Baptist Church
- ❑ Shelter succeeds in fulfilling the part of its mission related to harm reduction
- ❑ Shelter maintains a welcoming and respectful stance recognized by its guests
- ❑ Each season shows program improvements

Conclusions - 2

- ❑ Shelter strives to maintain an appropriate balance of risks, recognizing both the dangers faced by guests and those that may be posed by guests
- ❑ Shelter receives strong support from Public Safety, particularly the Amherst Police shelter team.
- ❑ There is a demonstrated openness to outside professionals and volunteers to provide assistance to guests
- ❑ Community support is firmly established, but could be enhanced

Significant Concerns

- A place to go
- Linkages to housing and other services and supports
- Increased presence of some homeless individuals during the day and in the months the shelter is closed
- Limitations of resources

Priority Populations for Access to Housing

Among guests of Craig's Place in 2013-14, 56 persons are considered highest priority for access to HUD-supported housing:

- 30 Individuals met HUD criteria for classification as “chronically homeless”
- 9 (of 12) additional persons are a priority because of veteran status;
- 17 (of 20) additional persons are a priority because of status as young adults

Recommendations: Issues to be addressed through Strategic Planning

1. Sustainable Funding
2. Strengthening Year Round Services
3. Right-sizing the Shelter
4. Enhancing the Board of Directors
5. Expanding Community Outreach
6. Planning for a Permanent Location

Additional Planned Research

What were we unable to accomplish in the last three months?

- What is the experience of Craig's Place guests? What assistance do they believe they need? What are the barriers to affordable housing? To other services and supports?
- What is the experience of volunteers? Do they receive the training and support needed to work well with guests?
- How does Craig's Place compare to other shelters in the local area?
- As the current season winds down, how has the program changed? What is the impact of these changes, particularly the use of the trailer?

Thank you!

#1 Andrea Miller, HMIS Data Director

Interviewees

State Legislators: Senator Stan Rosenberg, Representative Ellen Story

Shelter Board, Management and Guests: Rebekah Wilder, Christine Miranda, Joe Fleming, Kevin Noonan, Jerry Gates, Gerry Weiss plus Five Shelter Guests

Town Select Board, Management and Staff: Alisa Brewer, Connie Kruger, John Musante, David Ziomek, Scott Livingstone, Walter (Tim) Nelson, Julie Federman, Rob Morra, Linda Newcomb, Johanlet Medrano, Nate Malloy

State Legislators: Senator Stan Rosenberg, Representative Ellen Story

Area Service Providers: Hwei-Ling Greeney, Mindy Domb, Sarah Barr, Jay Levy, Meg Wright, Pamela Schwartz

Academic Mentors: Frank Couveras, Ralph Faulkingham

Housing & Sheltering Committee: Greg Stutsman, Nancy Gregg, Andrea Battle, Aaron Blodgett, Denise Leduc, Tom Kegelman